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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BAGHDAD 002611

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: FALLUJAH: GRASS ROOTS POLITICS -- LEADERS INITIATE POLITICAL AND SECURITY MEETINGS

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert S. Ford.

Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In a step promoting more political engagement by large segments of Anbar, 200 religious, tribal, political and academic leaders from around Fallujah on June 4 hammered out a fifteen-point document outlining a more participatory Sunni posture in the political process. Beyond the standard demand for a Coalition Forces withdrawal, the declaration condemns attacks against Iraqi civilians (not Coalition Forces) and urges participation in drafting of the constitution. A follow-on meeting is tentatively set for July in Fallujah with over 300 area participants expected. Internal dialogue about national political issues will remain the primary focus of future gatherings, according to organizers. They also flagged that similar meetings might be held in Ramadi and Al-Qa'im in coming weeks. A similar gathering of tribal leaders in Ramadi was scheduled for June 15 but was postponed due to insurgent intimidation in the city in advance of the session. These meetings and efforts to organize them do not mean that Anbaris won't boycott future elections, but they do suggest that Anbaris are more willing to engage in politics after the bitter January 2005 election experience. END SUMMARY.

SUNNI GRASS ROOTS POLITICS?

¶2. (C) According to one of the principal organizers, Engineer Fawzi Mohammed (local business leader and manager of a large Fallujah cement factory -- site of the meeting), the gathering of 200 area leaders mainly focused on the upcoming referendum and follow-on election. While a stated goal remained the withdrawal of Coalition Forces (and other now standard objections or complaints), increased Sunni political participation represented the primary impetus for the self-initiated meeting. Participants for the meeting included the full spectrum of local leaders from the tribes, clerics, business community and ex-military. (COMMENT: This gathering marks the first time that such a large group of Fallujans have met independently -- and at the grass roots level -- to discuss national political issues. Until now, most area caucuses have been almost exclusively geared toward Fallujah reconstruction specifics (water, power, sewer lines) or local political issues (compensation payments, etc.). END COMMENT.)

FALLUJAH SHOULD NOT BE HAND THAT DESTROYS IRAQ

¶3. (C) Fawzi acknowledged to Fallujah PolOff privately that "you know what happened in the last election" - adding that Sunnis did not want to repeat the mistake of failing to vote. He continued that Iraq should not be "stung by bombings; we want Iraq to be stable." Fawzi conveyed that when he went on trips to Baghdad, his family phoned him a dozen times each visit, to check on his safety. He did not want this situation to continue. (COMMENT: In December 2004 and January 2005, Fawzi used to reiterate to PolOff familiar Sunni arguments critical of the national political process and the need for election delay. He did the same in a January 2005 session, pre-election, with Senator John Kerry at Camp Fallujah. END COMMENT.)

¶4. (C) Fallujah, according to Fawzi, had suffered too much - and, as a city leader, he did not want Fallujah to "destroy the union of Iraq." He said that the city cannot be the "the hand that does that." Most wanted the situation to return back to normal. The meeting was intended to help pull some insurgents into this larger group. As for the next election, Fawzi declared it was more a matter of Sunnis having to vote, rather than wanting to vote.

¶5. (C) In a separate discussion, Fallujah reconstruction committee coordinator Basil Mahmoud

(who supplied Fallujah Poloff with a copy of the consensus document) confirmed Fawzi's characterization of the meeting. Basil noted that he had stayed in the back of the room throughout the two-hour session; the heated discussion had been wide ranging and included elements who opposed all aspects of the Coalition presence in Iraq. (NOTE: Basil did not categorize these participants as "insurgents" but implied as much. END NOTE). He added that Fawzi had brought together "not all the good people, but all the right people." More meetings needed to be held; a follow-on gathering in Fallujah proper was set for July. Basil said coalition forces would likely be asked to help provide security, given that 300 plus participants might attend.

CONSENSUS DOCUMENT: SOME NEW POINTS AMID USUAL COMPLAINTS

16. (C) The cement factory meeting resulted in a consensus document (full text, paragraph 14), listing 15 key points. Noteworthy in the list are the following:

--Condemnation of "all criminal activities against citizens and innocent Iraqi people. Any such action will be considered an act of terrorism." (number 3)

--Reforming a national committee to write the constitution that should include all the people's rights now and in the future. (number 8)

--Reforming the Iraqi Army with new technological and modern methods to be a strong army using the experience of ex-Iraqi officers. (number 9) (NOTE: Fallujah is home to a number of former military officers, many of whom served in key Iraqi army positions. They have established their own association in the city. END NOTE).

--Asking all neighboring countries not to interfere with Iraqi internal issues. (number 12)

--Allowing the people to participate in political actions and the writing of the constitution. (number 13)

--Ensuring that Iraq will be one nation that will stand against anybody trying to separate it. This will be considered the red line that nobody should pass under any circumstance. (number 14)

17. (C) Other points reflect usual demands or complaints, such as: specific timetable for Coalition Force withdrawal from Iraq; release of detainees; canceling the de-Ba'athification law; and formation of Fallujah security forces from city recruits. One additional request stands out: post-invasion compensation for damages "from all the countries that participated in the war in Iraq on unproven allegations, such as weapons of mass destruction." The group proposed that a United Nations body be established as was done in Kuwait after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait to oversee compensation payments. (COMMENT: The text drafters are unlikely to consider billions in appropriated U.S. reconstruction funds equivalent to war reparations. END COMMENT).

A GATHERING OF TRIBES

18. (C) Several area tribal leaders (Sheikh Abdulwahed Hamed Khaleel al Janabi, Hameed Farhan Abdullah Mohamdi al Hamda, Ahmad Sarhan Abed Mashan, Kamel Mohammed Saif) told poloff June 11 that the meeting's objectives were political in nature. When asked if local residents were intending to take part in the referendum and vote, even at this early stage, a half dozen nodded and raised hands expressing they would. (NOTE: This weekly meeting with so-called "street sheikhs" at the Fallujah Civil Military Operations Center includes about a dozen local tribal leaders, who in effect are the closest to the Fallujah-area people; the most senior tribal leaders sit on the new city council. END NOTE).

19. (C) At a June 14, 2005, Fallujah city council session, Sheikh Khamis Hisnawe Aifan al-Esawe (al-Buessa tribe) -- considered by many residents to be Fallujah's most influential and senior tribal leader -- made a notable, and uncharacteristic, public statement. He informed everyone gathered that he

would convene all area tribes in nearby Amiriyah, a community where "five or six dead bodies" were being found daily. The purpose of the gathering would be to address security issues. Khamis said the harassment needed to stop, as "these are our brothers." Coalition Forces and police should not be present, in order to avoid problems. Khamis added that the meeting would be held at the Amiriyah mosque, lists with names would be brought by tribes to "identify crooks and robbers." (NOTE: Initial reports indicate that the meeting was well attended. END NOTE)

RAMADI, TOO?

¶10. (C) Fawzi told PolOff June 7 that some Sunni leaders in Ramadi were considering forming their own political group, like the one in neighboring Fallujah. He did not offer details but noted that political interest among Sunnis had noticeably increased. Al Qa'im residents might do the same. According to a separate Marine intelligence report, an Iraqi source claims Ramadi leaders intend to hold this kind of meeting June 16. Marines in Ramadi confirmed at a June 15 meeting at the provincial government center that the political gathering would be held.

Anbar Governor Ma'moun told Marines that he was notified by organizers about the event, but believed he was not extended an invitation. He added "an uninvited guest at a banquet sits in no chair." The Governor stressed that that the official voice of Al Anbar would remain through the Provincial Council and his office. (NOTE: The June 16 gathering in Ramadi was postponed; insurgents effectively intimidated potential participants from attending the meeting. END NOTE)

COMMENT

¶11. (C) While these political and security initiatives by Fallujah and other area leaders remain in the initial stages, they mark a surprising shift. Organizing to such a degree at the local level will need to be sustained in coming weeks. A return to status quo Sunni indifference is possible, but unlikely if locals follow-up on these early initiatives. They could spread to other parts of Anbar.

¶12. (C) Engineer Fawzi Mohammed and Sheikh Khamis are representative of two key Sunni constituencies central to reversing insurgent intimidation and fostering political participation: the former is a major Anbar business leader and ex-Ba'athist; the latter a senior tribal sheikh. Both have considerable "wasta" (influence) in the community. If they are getting off the proverbial fence, others should follow.

¶13. (C) These meetings will not ensure high Sunni turnout for the referendum or on election day; taken together, however, they could be the basis for sustained political dialogue and voter education that equals sizeable turnout. In December 2004 and January 2005, Fallujah-area Sunnis fell largely silent on overarching political matters; today, there is at least the beginning of self-initiated and frank discourse, including about the costs of non-participation. The 15-point consensus document produced at the Fallujah meeting reveals -- for now -- this more balanced, and pragmatic, Sunni mindset at the grass-roots level.

¶14. (U) The consensus document agreed at June 4, 2005, meeting of Fallujah-area leaders is translated as follows.

BEGIN TEXT:

FINAL REPORT

The national political gathering in Fallujah held its initial meeting on June 4, 2005. The meeting included different groups from religious leaders, tribe leaders, political and education leaders.

The committee had a heated discussion about the future of Iraq regarding internal and international relationships. This will help avoid all kinds of discrimination and tribal differences. Fallujah will have one democratic group. This has been done through a democratic discussion between different people from Iraq. We will form a national team that will be working day and night to rebuild a democratic Iraq. This team will also help the citizens of Iraq to

participate in all political actions and decisions including the right to vote. We will not have a separated Iraq anymore. The committee also discussed all the issues that face Iraq at the present time. The committee agreed on some issues, to include politics and the constitution.

The points that the committee agreed on are:

- Setting a specific schedule for the occupational forces to withdraw from Iraq.
- Accepting a peaceful and a national force that follows all international laws.
- Condemning all criminal activities against citizens and innocent Iraqi people. Any such action will be considered an act of terrorism.
- Asking the occupational forces and the interim Iraqi government to release all political detainees. They will also stop raiding houses and mosques.
- To disband all illegal political parties in Iraq.
- Asking that the interim government to work on canceling all the Iraqi debt, as well as compensations that have been put on Iraq by unjust international decisions.
- Canceling Albaath law, and consider it as a legal not political issue.
- Reforming a national committee to write the constitution that should include all the people's rights now and in the future.
- Reforming the Iraqi army on new technological and modern methods to be a strong army using the experience from ex-loyal Iraqi officers.
- Calling for the withdrawal of the occupational forces from Fallujah; and forming an Iraqi police and an army from the people of Fallujah itself to do their duty in keeping peace.
- Allowing all Middle Eastern and foreign mass media to get in Fallujah to send to the world a picture of what really happened.
- Asking all neighboring countries not to interfere with the Iraqi internal issues.
- Allowing the people to participate in political actions and the writing of the constitution.
- The committee will ensure that Iraq will be one nation that will stand against anybody trying to separate it. This will be considered the red line that nobody should pass under any circumstances.
- The committee will ask for compensation from all the countries that participated on the war in Iraq on unproven allegations; such as weapons of mass destruction. This compensation will be given to a committee that the United Nations will establish as they did in Kuwait. Any Iraqi, company, or government institution has the right to turn in their claims to get their compensation.

Finally, the committee's door is open for any efforts that will help the abovementioned points.

END TEXT.

Satterfield